

8-15-1945

The Foolishness of God

Wyatt Sawyer

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.harding.edu/wyatt-sawyer-sermons>

Recommended Citation

Sawyer, W. (1945). The Foolishness of God. Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.harding.edu/wyatt-sawyer-sermons/45>

This Sermon is brought to you for free and open access by the Wyatt Sawyer Archive at Scholar Works at Harding. It has been accepted for inclusion in Wyatt Sawyer Sermon Outlines by an authorized administrator of Scholar Works at Harding. For more information, please contact scholarworks@harding.edu.



THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD

I hasten to the reading of our Bible Text this morning, even before telling you the title of this sermon--**lest** you feel that I am speaking somewhat blasphemously.

Our reading is taken from the First Corinthian letter, chapter one, and verses 18 through 31.

18. ("For the preaching is the cross is to them that PERISH foolishness; but unto us, who are saved, it is the POWER ~~MM~~ of God. *Preaching is Power. Rom. 1:16.*)
19. For it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise/ and will bring to nothing the understanding of the haughty intellectual (or prudent).
20. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?
21. For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.
22. For the Jews seek a sign/ and the Greeks seek after wisdom:
23. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock and unto the Greeks foolishness;
24. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.
25. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.
26. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men AFTER THE FLESH, not many mighty, not many noble are called/
27. But God has chosen the FOOLISH things of the world to **confound** the wise; and God has chosen the WEAK things of the world to confound the things that are mighty;
28. AND, base things of the world and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea/ and things³ which are NOT, to ~~bright~~ ^{bring} to nought things that are:
29. THAT no flesh should glory in His presence.
30. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness/and sanctification/and redemption:
31. That according as it is written: HE THAT GLORIETH, LET HIM GLORY IN THE LORD!!!! [repeat]

Problem
God supreme
Serpent

The TITLE of my sermon this morning is: THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD. I am aware that this sounds like blasphemy, coming from a weak and frail human being. And so it would be if it were not used in the same sense that the Apostle Paul uses it in verse 25 of our reading.

He is saying THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD (or rather that which MEN count as foolishness) is nonetheless WISER THAN MEN. God at His weakest point (if we can even speak in such a term)—is still far, far stronger than man at his STRONGEST POINT.

Actually, the Apostle Paul is dealing with a very prevalent human problem. It is so natural and so human for people to revel in their own wisdom. Who is there who hasn't, at one time or the other, received very important NEWS before anyone else? Wasn't it an exelaterating experience to get to tell everyone the good news—and be the FIRST to tell it?

It is somehow within human nature for a man to want to know MORE than those around him; to know things FIRST and to show himself SUPERIOR to others by his early or superior knowledge.

Now let me hasten to add that there is nothing wrong, in most cases for one to get first information or to gain more knowledge than others. There is little wrong with him revealing such—IF he maintains ~~his~~ humility.

BUT, if a man becomes ARROGANT, HAUGHTY and HIGH-MINDED he becomes a liability to society, rather than an asset to his friends.

GOD - knowing this nature within His creation ~~man~~ has done some highly unusual things in the past. He has recorded these most irregular things in the scriptures for our learning. And there is one basic lesson in it all for man today. That is: THERE IS NO PLACE for human vanity, and pride and "know it all" in God's sceme of redemption for man.

The Apostle John, in Revelation 19:1-2 characterizes the nature and essence of God. He says, "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in Heaven, saying, ALLELUIA: SALVATION, and GLORY and HONOR, and POWER, unto the Lord our God: FOR true and righteous are his judgments:..."

God is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-teaching and all-blessing. SO, He deserves all the glory. All blessings come from Him. James 1:17.

I. God's Foolishness in the Old Testament

The student of the scriptures well remembers some most unusual things which took place in the Old Testament. The story of the BRAZEN SERPENT in the wilderness is one. The HEALING OF NAAMAN the Syrian is another. A third is the DEFEAT OF THE CITY OF JERICOHO. Each of these stories depict the foolishness of God.(as man would view it.)

Brazen Serpent

Numbers 21:1-9 tells of the murmuring of Israel against God. The Israelites journeyed from mount Hor, by the Red Sea and planned to go around the land of the Edomites. Then they became discouraged. They complained that they had no bread and no water—and besides they were tired of the manna God had been

Serpent Coil -
Naaman

sending them. The Lord's patience ~~was~~ ^{wore} thin so He sent fiery serpents among the people, and the children of Israel began to die in large numbers. This brought Israel to her knees. They said to Moses, ("We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord that He take away the serpents from us.") And Moses prayed for the people.

The Lord told Moses to make a Brazen (or brass) snake and ~~put it upon~~ ^{put it upon} a pole. And the Lord said, ("and it shall come to pass that everyone that is bitten, WHEN HE LOOKETH UPON IT, shall live.")

Moses made the brazen serpent. He put it on the pole. He raised the pole in the midst of Israel. Those who LOOKED UPON the snake were saved.

This incident took place about 1453 B. C. This is back before modern medical science to be sure. But how many men then or now would have prescribed this kind of REMEDY for snake bite? How many men would have said, "I told you so—all you need to do for a poisonous viper bite is make a metal snake and lift it up on a pole and look at it!!! HOW MANY WOULD LIVE OVER THE BITE OF A POISONOUS REPTILE TODAY using such an unusual technique? None of course! This was simply a case of the FOOLISHNESS OF GOD being wiser than men.

Naaman

OR, take the story of the Captain of the Syrian army. He was a great and honorable man. The Lord had even used him to punish Israel for her sins. In II Kings 5 we learn that this man was a LEPER.

Now in his house was a little Israelite maiden, who had been captured in one of the Syrian raids on Israel. Instead of being hateful and resentful because of her captivity, she said to her mistress: ("Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria. He would recover him of his leprosy." 3.)

This word was brought to Naaman, the captain of the Syrian army, and he was soon on his way to Samaria to seek healing. He courteously approached the king of Samaria first, but soon learned that this was the wrong source. Healing in the name of the Lord was with ELISHA the prophet—not the king of Samaria.

The solution to Naaman's leprosy was a simple one. Go to the Jordan river and dip in it seven times. NOW CAN'T YOU HEAR DOCTORS EVERYWHERE SAYING "I knew it all the time! There are magic powers in the Jordan. Send everyone to the Jordan river who has leprosy and all shall be healed." NO. Not a single doctor of that day made such a prescription. Many had been in that river before and many after—and perhaps many were lepers, but NONE were healed in the fashion that Naaman was.

Jesus, Himself said so. In Luke 4:27 He said, ("And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha, the prophet; and NONE of them were cleansed, saving NAAMAN the Syrian.")

Naaman can't -
Jericho
N.T. - Blind
Takes

Even Naaman thought this too foolish to listen to. He said, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he ~~man~~ turned and went away in a rage." II Kings 5:12.

However, his servant had more humility and good judgment than Naaman. He finally persuaded his master to go to the river—THE JORDAN RIVER. He persuaded him to dip in these water SEVEN TIMES. Six would not have been enough. God said SEVEN. After the seventh dip ("his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.") Vs. 14. NO MAN DID nor COULD GLORY is his own human wisdom. Indeed, the foolishness of God is wiser than men! *and the glory of healing belongs to God!*

Walls of Jericho

In Joshua chapter 6 and verses 1 through 20 we have the story of the fall of the Walls of Jericho. The world has never known such strange military strategy. No Army General or Major nor Captain nor Private would suggest the tactics required by the Lord in this battle.

Six days Israel marched around the walls of Jericho—silently.

On the seventh day they marched around the walls seven times and on the last time around the priests blew their trumpets and the people shouted and the walls of Jericho fell flat.

What man or men predicted such an event? Who had first-hand knowledge of such a strange victory? Who could say, "That is EXACTLY THE WAY I would have done it!" None. This was done in this manner that NO FLESH SHOULD GLORY IN HIS OWN WISDOM OR POWER. The glory belonged exclusively to the Lord!

II Divine Foolishness in the New Testament

In the Gospel of John, chapter 9 and verses 1 - 9 we have the story of Jesus healing a man who had been blind from his birth. Jesus simply spat on the ground, made a clay-salve of the spittle and earth, and anointed the eyes of the blind man. Then Jesus said, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." The man went to the pool, washed his eyes and he could see.

What OCULIST today, or OPTOMETRIST would recommend the "clay-salve" treatment for CONGENITAL BLINDNESS??? None of course. Only God could heal in such a fashion.

OR, consider the incident in Matthew 17:24-27. When Jesus and His disciples came to Capernaum they were asked about the payment of taxes to the Roman Government. Lest He offend, Jesus proposed to pay taxes to Caesar. But who would have thought of securing the finances needed in the strange manner He used. He sent Peter to the lake with a line and fishhook. The first fish Peter caught had a piece of money in it. It was enough. NOW HOW MANY MEN DO YOU THINK SAID: "I told you so. I knew he would pay His taxes this way?" None, because mere men do not pay their taxes in this fashion.

Foolishness of Preaching

Healing sick people with a brazen serpent is foolish. Healing a leper

*Foolishness of preaching cross
Acts in Salvation
Faith*

in the Jordan river is also foolish. Shouting the walls down of a mighty city is foolishness also. And doesn't it seem foolish — to man — to cure a blind man with clay and spittle? Or, pay taxes from a ^{coin in a} fishes mouth? TO MEN, all of this is foolishness, but to the CHRISTIAN BELIEVER it is only God's way of circumventing the haughty and arrogant nature of man.

I Corinthians 1:21.

Verse 21 of our text says: ("For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.")

QUESTION:

WHAT FOOLISH ACT OR ACTS HAS THE LORD REQUIRED OF THE SINNER TO BE SAVED?

THE LORD REQUIRES "FAITH." Is this a foolish act?

Hebrews 11:6 says: ("But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.")

Paul
In Acts 16:31/says: ("Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.")

In Acts 10:43 Peter says: "To him (that is Jesus) give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins."

FAITH IS NOT CONSIDERED A FOOLISH ACT BY MAN. He practices it many times each day. He manifests faith everytime he gets on an elevator; when he eats food at a cafe or restaurant (that it is safe to eat); when he buys a car or a new suit of clothes. He shows faith and trust in both people and products.

WHAT I'M SAYING IS: Human wisdom justifies the principle of living by faith.

X

Repentance
Confession
Baptism

REPENTANCE IS NOT CONSIDERED A FOOLISH ACT BY MAN. Families practice it frequently. Friends practice it often. They say, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to offend you. I won't do it again." or "I'm sorry I failed to keep our appointment. I just forgot it. I'll write myself a reminder next time. I hope you will forgive me."

Jesus expressed the importance of repentance in Luke 13:3. "I tell you, Nay: but except you repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

In Acts 17:30 Paul said, "And the times of this ignorance God overlooked, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."

In II Pet. 3:9 Peter said, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to REPENTANCE."

HUMAN WISDOM AGREES THAT Repentance is a reasonable religious requirement.



CONFESSION IS ANOTHER ACT THAT HUMAN WISDOM CONSIDERS REASONABLE & JUSTIFIED.

We confess our faith and confidence in each other almost daily. The wedding vows are nothing more than a public expression of confidence in each other. When we go on a friend's note at the bank, it is nothing more than an open expression of confidence in the honesty and integrity in a friend.

Jesus says: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father in heaven." Matt. 10:32.

HUMAN WISDOM AGAIN AGREES THAT THIS RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IS SENSIBLE.



The World Balks at the Foolishness of Baptism

Jesus said: "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth: Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Matt. 28:18-19.

In Mark 16:15-16 He said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Other Bible passages teach this same thing: Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16,, I Pet. 3:21, Acts 10:48 etc. etc.

NOW HERE IS ONE PLACE where no man exercises his vanity and ego. Never have I heard any say, "I knew God would do it that way. OR That's what I would have suggested too. I told you so!" NONE OF THIS.

INSTEAD, many people say this is FOOLISHNESS (I see no purpose in it.) It is UNREASONABLE. Certainly, it is CONTROVERSIAL.

11:22

Test
Challenge
Faith
Inv.

7.

Let us remember that it PLEASED God by the FOOLISHNESS of preaching to SAVE those that BELIEVE. "Faith comes by hearing and ~~seeing~~ ^{HEARING} by the Word of God." Romans 10:17.

GOD inspires ministers of the gospel to PREACH BAPTISM. To the Greeks this is foolishness. To the Jews this is a stumbling stone.

BAPTISM is a test of faith in God. It is a challenge to man's loyalty and trust to sacred things. It is proof of his devotion to his God.

SOME SAY: "But, I don't understand the NEED of it."

Neither did Naaman understand the NEED of dipping in Jordan; and the need of dipping SEVEN times. It was a matter of faith in God.

The Israelites certainly could not understand the NEED of marching around Jericho's walls or of ~~merely~~ merely shouting and blowing the rams horns. It was a matter of faith in God.

INV:

IT IS A MATTER OF FAITH IN ~~God~~ ^{Christ} TODAY:

MY SINNER FRIEND!

That you REPENT OF YOUR SINS that they may be cleansed by the blood of Christ.

That you CONFESS His name publically before men--that He may confess your name before the Father in Heaven.

That you are BAPTIZED in water for the remission of sins THIS MORNING.

If you believe in the Lord this morning, then you need to be BAPTIZED by His authority this morning.

TO WAYWARD BRETHREN: Jesus teaches that except YOU repent YOU will likewise perish. You need to return to the Lord and His Church. We'll be happy to pray for and with you for the forgiveness of your sins.

TO NEWCOMERS: We invite you to become a part of the Lord's work here at Southside. All you need do is let it be known that you wish to work and worship with us.

We invite you to come.

THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD

INT: * I Cor. 1:18-31. Text with some unusual thts.

1. Preaching of beautiful message resisted 18
2. A loving God will DESTROY error. 19-20.
3. There will always be the church and by the church there will always be preaching
4. Gospel always be opposed. V. 23.
5. Some of the world's greats will be put down by the Lord. Sooner or later!
6. God has chosen some: Foolish, weak, base and despised things to confound=(to put to shame) those who THINK they are mighty (Base: low in the world's esteem.)
7. Reason: To keep the glory and honor in this world where it belongs. V. 29-31.*

Conclusions:

1. Man can ~~not~~ never understand everything.
a. Deut. 29:29. II Pet. 3:16.
2. He can understand enough to please God and be saved; no matter how strange it may seem to man. II Tim. 2:15.
3. God's strange provisions have two main purposes. (Test the sincere, to expose the insincere, egotistical & unbelieving)

I. God's People in O. T. Really Tested.

- A. Brazen serpent. Num. 21:7-9. 1453 BC remedy. What man prescribe this? Brag??
- B. Naaman's leprosy. II K. 5:1-14. Why 7? No "I told you so" here. Strange remedy!
- C. Joshua 6:1-20. Jericho's walls.

Note: Nothing explains these but the POWER of God in His own divine-strange ways

II. God's People in N. T. Severely Tested also.

- A. Sight to the Blind. John 9:1-9. Faith???
What man say: I knew it!
- B. Tax money in fishes' mouths. Mt. 17:24-27.
Who wishes to try it now? Advise it?

III. MEN STILL RESIST GOD'S UNEXPLAINED PROVISIONS.

- A. Faith. Understandable. Daily exercise.
In self, friends, merchants and God! Reasonable Acts 16:31 understood.
- B. REPENTANCE. Reasonable also. Families practice it often. Wrong-regret-apologize-forgive. Acts 17:30 understood.

MT 12-16-73 / R

C. CONFESSION. Sensible. Daily practice.
Weddings. Intro. of friends. Defend a frier
Matt. 10:32 understandable.

D. Baptism. To the world: Foolish, unreason- ble
only a symbol, just a sign---but of no
intrinsic value. Not really essential nor
necessary. More an afterthought.
Then why: Mk. 16:15-16. Acts 2:38.
Acts 10:48. Acts 22:16. I Pet. 3:21.
With or without understanding: It is
a spiritual test of one's Faith, Trust,
Love, Devotion and Loyalty to God.

INV: True Bible-believer doesn't need to understand
all the fine points in order to obey
God. I John 5:3.

He just loves the Lord and does what He says.
John 14:15.

This is all that Jesus is asking YOU to do!